

COPY

Memorandum of Conversation

March 19, 1958

Participants: Mr. Valentin Ivanov, First Secretary
Soviet Embassy

Mr. Robert E. Matteson

At Mr. Ivanov's invitation, I met him for lunch at the LaFayette Hotel at 12:30 P.M., Wednesday, March 19, 1958. The luncheon lasted until 2:30 P.M. and the conversation covered a wide variety of subjects. About 90% of the conversation involved questions which I asked Ivanov. During the conversation, Ivanov was very frank and extremely congenial -- more so, I think, than any other Soviet official I have met. At the same time, as might be expected, he did not have the precise knowledge of disarmament which Soviet experts have.

The following were the points of interest:

1. In response to my comment that Ambassador Menshikov seemed to have had a successful meeting with the delegation of Ohio Republican women yesterday, Ivanov laughed and said they were women and so were easily impressed. He remarked that he was surprised by how uninformed they were about national and international affairs, especially since they were in politics. He added that he supposed this was also true of people in his country.
2. He volunteered that Ambassador Menshikov had not done very well on the Sunday TV "Youth Wants to Know" program. He said this was so in spite of the fact that the Embassy staff had prepared for him one page answers to anticipated questions. He remarked that newspaper men are much better informed than either the Ohio women or the panel of youth and that Menshikov had had a very tough "off-the-record" session recently with a group of newspaper men and also had had a tough time at the recent National Press Club luncheon.
3. Ivanov asked me what I was doing and I said remaining on the White House staff although disarmament was now in the State Department.
4. I told him I had read Khrushchev's pre-election speech and wondered whether Khrushchev meant that the Soviet was about to announce a unilateral cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons. He said

no - not at all. I then repeated the language Khrushchev had used which made it sound as if he had changed or was about to change his position. He said he would have to check that and I said I would call him on the phone. He said please do.

5. Ivanov said that Khrushchev had never indicated that the Soviet would unilaterally stop testing. He said that since the US was ahead in the nuclear field, the Soviet could not unilaterally stop either testing or the production of nuclear weapons.

6. I remarked that Khrushchev seemed more impressed than ever with the destructive power of nuclear weapons - that he said their use could lead to the destruction of nearly all living organisms. Ivanov said that this was so - but that he didn't mean that all human beings would be killed. Life would still go on. On the other hand, the development of the destructive power of nuclear weapons was so great that no one would want a nuclear war.

7. He said - in response to my question - there is no longer possible any such thing as a local war of the Korean or Indo-Chinese type. Nuclear weapons were now conventional weapons in modern armies and the use of nuclear weapons locally would set off a chain reaction. He said the Korean war could have become a general war if MacArthur had used atomic weapons on (Red) China.

8. Ivanov said the thing to fear and watch out for is that an accident or an incident might occur which would lead to general nuclear war. I asked him whether the Soviet - in that case - was serious about sending volunteers into the Suez area at the time of the Suez crisis. He said yes - to stop the British and French. But - he quickly added that Bulganin's idea of having the US and Soviet join forces in the Suez to stop aggression was even a better method.

9. I asked him what the Soviet would think of other joint endeavors - such as joint development of the peaceful uses of outer space, joint controlled thermonuclear research, joint development of underdeveloped areas, joint participation in regional security pacts. To each of these he said with enthusiasm that this was what the Soviet would like to see.

10. I asked him how he reconciled Khrushchev's statement that Soviet policy was not to interfere in other countries' internal affairs with the Soviet action in Hungary. He answered that if you were an ordinary Soviet citizen, your view of Hungary was that until the end of World War II it was a fascist enemy controlled by Admiral Horthy.

He said that this being so - the Soviet could not tolerate a counter-revolution which would re-establish on the Soviet border a fascist state. He indicated that there was some difference of view about Hungary in the Soviet - that a small group of students, for example, did not share the above viewpoint.

11. I asked him if the Soviet, in his opinion, had ever committed aggression. He at first said no and when I mentioned Finland, he said that some might consider this aggression but that the Finnish war actually was the introduction to World War II - that Finland was being set up as an offensive base by Germany, that in reality the Soviet move was defensive.

12. I asked him how he thought the ordinary Soviet official or citizen viewed the outside world. He said that during the Stalin period, they regarded the outside world with extreme suspicion, but that with more contact, this was changing. He said, however, that the ordinary person had fear of encirclement by US bases and nuclear weapons and wondered how a US citizen would feel if the situation were reversed. He also said that occasionally there were statements by certain groups in the US which led people in the Soviet to believe that if certain groups came into power in the US, these bases would be used as the jump off for a preventive war.

13. Realizing I would open myself to a doctrinal lecture, I asked him about Khrushchev's concept of freedom, i.e., "the liberation of the people from the horrors of unemployment and misery, from racial, national, and social oppression." I asked how he translated this into real political and economic freedom. I referred to Khrushchev's statement in the New York Times today in which he was reported as saying the Communist Party controlled the nominations. Ivanov, at first, said this wasn't a correct report. Then he said that it was true that there was a Communist Party slate but that the people had the right to reject the slate and even to write in new nominations. He said Communist Party members were 6 million people out of over 200 million and how could a minority dictate to the rest unless the rest agreed with the minority. I said that Stalin was known to have made good use of the police. He said that it was true Stalin had made mistakes. He said that under the present leadership things were different - that there were real discussions at all levels and real differences of opinion expressed. He referred to the decentralization of industry as being a move that resulted from discussions at all levels by many different bodies. I asked him if it weren't true that Soviet people wanted very much to have their own private plot of land, their own cows and pigs, - even their own factory. He said this was true within limits and that it was permitted within limits - that if a

man were to own a factory, it would go beyond the constitution of the state and would be considered exploitation. He said, on the other hand, if enough people wanted to own a factory, there would be another revolution and the present system would be overthrown. He said it was to get rid of the past factory-owners and land-owners that the 1917 revolution was fought.

14. I asked him about himself - if he was married, what his father did, his wife's father, etc. He said he was married and had children - that his wife preferred to work even though he had enough money to support her. I asked him if he didn't prefer to have his wife with the children rather than working. He said no - that it was better for the children to be in a collective kindergarten and school - that he believed in the collective life. He said he had worked in a "supply" factory during the war - then took the exams for the Foreign Trade School because he had friends there. After finishing the three year course, he joined Menshikov who was Minister of Trade (or in the Ministry of Trade) in 1947. It was in the Foreign Trade School that he learned English. Later - I think he said 1950 - he transferred to the Foreign Service and served at the United Nations. He has been on this current assignment since the middle of last year. He said his father was a "car driver" and had died in 1956 (?) of a brain hemorrhage. His mother still lived in Moscow - which was Ivanov's birthplace. His father knew Bulganin - and "Bulganin isn't very ----." It seemed as if he were going to say "smart" - but then changed to say: "Bulganin is smart but he is liked by people because of his personality - like President Eisenhower." His grandfather was a peasant and his great grandfather was a serf. His wife's father is a railroad conductor.

15. Ivanov then asked about Secretary Dulles. He wondered how long Dulles would stay on. I said I didn't know but I assumed he would stay on as long as President Eisenhower. He asked whether bilateral conversations with the Soviet were possible. I said I believed they were as possible now as they were before - that, as our UN people had said, conversations might be carried on under the umbrella of the Security Council or even the Disarmament Commission. He said he understood the Disarmament Commission was called for March 26th. I said I hadn't heard that. He wondered whether it was necessary to have disarmament discussed in the UN. I said that the UN was the agreed worldwide organization and that, as the Soviets had indicated, disarmament was of vital interest to each nation. Therefore, it seemed logical that it be discussed in the UN. Regarding the 25-nation Disarmament Commission, I said that it had been voted by the vast majority and there-

fore it was also logical that it might be called. He asked about a Summit meeting. I said that the Secretary had already said that the US position was it favored one if adequately prepared for. He granted that it would do no good to have one unless prepared for. He said the Soviet didn't want one for propaganda reasons but to reach agreement. He said the preparation could be by Ambassadors and by Foreign Ministers.

16. He asked about the subjects for agreement. I said that each side seemed to have its lists of what should be on the agenda and that there seemed to be certain items - such as surprise attack zones - that were similar. I asked about control of outer space. He said not without elimination of US bases. I asked if it wouldn't be possible that surprise attack zones might take care of the base question. He said no - that what was required - if outer space were to be negotiated - was the equivalent on our side which was the bases. He said this did not mean that the bases should be wiped out - but merely turned over to the country in which they were located and US personnel removed. He said under such an arrangement, the military pacts would still exist but that it would be hoped that non-aggression treaties could be worked out.

17. I told Ivanov that the great difficulty with Soviet proposals was that given the lack of mutual trust, we didn't consider their proposals to include adequate inspection to verify the commitment. I asked why it was that the Soviet had been so unwilling to open up to the necessary inspection. I said I knew that the usual answer had been that we were seeking intelligence about new targets. He acknowledged that this had been the answer but went on to say that one must understand the Russian mentality to appreciate their reluctance to open up, not only to inspection, but to tourists. He said the Soviet had had great suspicion of foreigners and because of past history mistrusted what they were up to. In addition, the Soviet Union had been fully occupied in developing the country - and didn't have enough resources to provide hotels, etc. for tourists. Likewise, the Soviet never believed in tourism as a large source of revenue. However, this was now changing because of the greatly increased tensions caused by the arms race and it was felt that everything possible should be done to permit tourists to come in and get to know Russians better. So far as inspection is concerned, he said we accept surprise attack zones; we accept inspection for tests; we accept inspection for control of outer space and bases. Regarding inspection for tests, I asked what was meant. He said their scientists admit that certain tests in the ground and high in the stratosphere can be hidden and that the Soviet was willing to have instrumented ground posts. He asked whether our position on separating out tests had changed. He referred to the Hightower and Reston stories that seemed to indicate it had changed. I

said our position had not changed so far as I knew but that I had seen the stories he referred to.

18. I asked him about Khrushchev's remarks in his speech about the status of women. Ivanov said women are considered the equal of men - that they have equal rights and are expected to do equal work. He said with a laugh that he knew some women who were physically stronger than he. I said I hoped for his sake that one of them wasn't his wife. He laughed and said that the West tends to spoil women - and act as if they were not supposed to work. He also thought that the Western schools wasted too much time on teaching subjects that could be picked up outside of school - like geography, history, literature, etc. On the other hand, the school years in the Soviet were devoted to learning languages, science, and engineering which were more difficult to learn without instruction. As we left, he reminded me that I was going to call him about the question of the Khrushchev speech. (Note: I did - half an hour after I left him - but the answer was he wasn't there but would call me. As of now, he hasn't.)

Robert E. Matteson

~~TOP SECRET~~